

1746
*The Fatherly Pity and Everlasting
Mercy of the Lord to them that
fear him :*

Considered in a

S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D in

New Broad-Street, London,

On Occasion of the D E A T H of

Mrs. *E L E A N O R,*

The W I F E of

Mr. *J O H N B I G G,*

Who departed this Life

OCTOBER 21, 1746. ÆTAT. 56.

By *J O H N A L L E N, M. D.*

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204

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PSALM ciii. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

Like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our Frame, he remembereth that we are Dust. As for Man, his Days are as Grass, as a Flower of the Field so he flourisheth. For the Wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the Place thereof shall know it no more. But the Mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his Righteousness unto Childrens Children. To such as keep his Covenant, and to those that remember his Commandments to do them.

AS the Providence of God has an instructive Language as well as his Word, and we ought to have our Ears open to the Discipline of both, I design this Discourse as an Improvement of the Death of a valuable Member of this Congregation, Mrs. ELEANOR BIGG: And I take the Words I have read as the Foundation of my Thoughts, as I have been directed to them by the loving and beloved Husband she hath left behind; and because I think there is something in them particularly suited to her Circumstances

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stances and Condition in the latter Part of her Life.

The Psalm itself is a noble Hymn of Praise to God: What gave the direct Occasion for the Composition of it was probably *David's* Recovery from a Fit of Sickness; for he speaks of God's *delivering his Life from Destruction, healing his Diseases, and renewing his Youth like the Eagle's*: But it is natural in pious and devout Minds, that the Receipt of one Blessing from God should awaken the Memory and Sense of others: accordingly, with uncommon Grandeur of Sentiment and Expression, he calls upon *his Soul and all that was within him to bless the Name of God, and not forget all his Benefits*. From the Contemplation of the Goodness of God to himself, he descends to a View of the great and extensive Effects of it among his Creatures, especially the Family of *Israel*, v. 6—13.

He then draws a Picture of the State and the Life of Man in this World, which, tho' very gloomy is very just; his *Frame is Dust*, his *Days are as Grass*, and as the *Flower of the Field so he flourisheth, over which the Wind passeth and it is gone, and the Place thereof shall know it no more*. — But you may observe, that all he says on this mournful Topic is only with a view of doing the proper Honour to the Goodness, which was large enough to fill up this poor Creature's Vanity and Emptiness. *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him*: If they are *Dust* he knoweth their
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Frame, and remembereth that they are so: If the Days of Man are as Grass, &c. in the Shortness of their Duration and Extent, and the Vanity of any Dependence upon them, The Mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his Righteousness unto Childrens Children, &c.

In entering upon this Subject, I would observe, that tho' we have, in the sacred Writings, such an Account of the divine Nature as fully coincides with the most exact and just Reasonings of our Minds concerning that excellent and all-perfect Being, yet the Scripture has not given us Ideas of a God in an abstract and philosophical Way, but the Representation is accommodated to the various Passions and Affections of our Nature, that by getting hold of our Hearts it might strike us in the most lively and sensible manner. I might mention Instances where most of the divine Perfections are spoken of under these sort of Figures; but this way of speaking is in nothing more remarkable, than in the Accounts the Scriptures give us of the divine Goodness and Benignity: Upon *this* Topic the Language of Men seems to be ransacked, to find out Words that should be sufficiently encouraging. 'Tis not enough that the Scripture has told us, and repeats it a thousand times, that God is a Being of infinite and unbounded Goodness, but if there is a Name and Character of peculiar Tendernefs and endearing Compassion among

Men, that is laid hold of, and the Goodness of God is represented by it. His Saints and Servants are his *Chosen*, his *Heritage*, his *Jewels*, and *the Apple of his Eye*; and he is their *Husband*, their *Father*, their *Friend*; and every thing that can betoken his Affection to them, and their Safety and Happiness in his Favour. Now in meditating on these Names and Characters, tho', on the one hand, it would be wrong to strain them to any gross and fulsome Ideas; and we ought ever to remember that whatever Kindness and Affection they import, it can be no other than what is worthy of the all-perfect God, and his entire Nature; yet as he has assumed these Names and Characters on purpose to encourage our Hope and Confidence, it would be both Ingratitude to him and Cruelty to ourselves, if we did not extract all the Consolation out of them which they fairly will afford: I hope I shall keep this double Caution before my Eyes, while I open the lovely Representation the Text gives us of the divine Goodness, that *like as a Father pitieth his Children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, that he knoweth our Frame, and remembereth that we are Dust. That as for Man, tho' his Days are as Grass, &c. Yet the Mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, &c.* As the Lord's *pitying them that fear him* supposes something in their Case that is *pitiable*, and *his Mercy being upon them*, supposes some Deficiency, Distress and
Mifery

Misery on their Part, which calls for and needs his Mercy, the most natural Division of my Subject will be this.

- I. To enquire what there is in the Case of good Men, that stands in need of *Pity* and of *Mercy*.
- II. To shew how under all the pitiable Circumstances of their Distress, *The Lord pities them like as a Father pitieth his Children, and his Mercy towards them is from everlasting to everlasting.*

I. I am to enquire what there is in the Case and Circumstances of good Men that stands in need of *Pity* and *Mercy*. There is a great deal in their Case and Character that calls for *Joy*, *Thankfulness*, and a *noble Glorifying*: A Saint is the most lovely and happy Creature out of Heaven: Take such an one in the most depreſt and loaded, and others in the most elevated and happy Circumstances that human Nature knows, *he* is to be felicitated, and *they* are to be pitied; and accordingly he would not change his Condition, upon the whole, for all that this or a thousand ſuch Worlds as this could give; but at the ſame time that there is a bright ſide of his Caſe, there is a dark one too, and ſomething that ſtands in need of *Pity* and of *Mercy*; and, to be ſatisfied of this, let us take a ſhort View of the State of Man in this World, and the Inconveniencies which, as all are born to,

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so neither the Religion of a good Man's Heart on the one hand, nor the peculiar Regards of God for him on the other, do exempt him from ; and, for the sake of Order, let us consider Man with reference to the two great Ingredients of his Composition, his *Body* and his *Soul* ; his animal, and his intellectual Part.

1. As to his Body or animal Part : 'Tis but to open, and a little illustrate the account given in the Text, and we have a full View of the State of Man as to this lower Part of his Nature : Our *Frame* is Dust, and our *Days are as Grass* : The *Frame* is indeed *wonderfully made*, and *curiously wrought*, and its Formation shews the Builder's amazing Wisdom ; but still it is but *Dust* ; the Materials are but *Dust*, tho' the Workmanship is so exquisite and divine ; and being made of *Dust*, *to Dust it will return*. The very Principles by which our Frame subsists, both necessitate and bring on its Dissolution, and make Death quite as natural as is our Life. The Psalmist further tells us that *as for Man, his Days are as Grass, and as the Flower of the Field, so he flourisheth, &c.* *As for Man*,—the Creature that makes such a Noise and Parade in the World, that is formed for a longer Duration in the World than most of the other Beings, that live upon this Spot ; *Man*—that has contrived so many ways to keep out Diseases and Death, by Food, by Medicine, and by Clothing——*his Days are as Grass,*

Grass, and the Flower of the Field:—How insignificant is a Blade of Grass, how many of them are trampled upon and perish, and no Notice is taken of them : and of what account is Man to the Almighty God ? What is he, with all his Pride and Vanity, in Comparison with the nobler Works of the divine Hand ?—How weak and frail is the *Grass*, and *the Flower of the Field* ? A Tree is not brought down without some Labour, but *the Grass and the Flower of the Field* is easily destroyed ; *The Wind passeth over it and it is gone* ; a Blast of Cold nips it, and a little Gleam of immoderate Heat burns it up : Such are the Days of Man in this World : We are in some Danger every Step we tread, and in every Place we go into. So many are the Doors at which Death may come in, that we may meet it at our Tables, in any Morfel we eat, and any Draught we drink ; the very Instruments and natural means of preserving Life may let in Death upon us.

Some Things that are naturally feeble may last a great while ; but *the Grass and Flower of the Field* is not one of that Number ; *to-day it is, and to-morrow it is cast into the Oven* : It soon dies of itself, tho' nothing should destroy and cut it down ; and in this too the Days of Man are *as the Grass and the Flower of the Field*. Old Age will soon do the Work of Death, if no Distemper does it before.

All I have said under this Head, describes what is the Lot of Man in his best Estate : Let
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the Texture of the bodily Frame be ever so strong, ever so beautiful, it is but Dust; let the Days of Man be ever so fair and bright, and be the Storms that ruffle them ever so few, still the Psalmist's Description suits them; but how much blacker Scenes might one draw; and yet take the blackest of them from Originals, that are far from uncommon in the World:—The Miseries that flow into the World from cruel Oppression, when on the Side of the *Oppressor there is Power*, and the oppressed *have no Comforter*;—the Tears of the Fatherless and the Widow;—the unknown and little regarded Agony of a dejected melancholy Mind, and disturbed Imagination;—the chastening of our Bones with Pain, and the Multitude of our Bones with strong Pain;—the Cases where the most severe bodily Disorders and the most sharp and distressing Poverty and Want meet together;—what Mankind may suffer from one another, the Unkindness of Friends, the Malice of Enemies, besides what may arise from the general Contraction and Hardness of Men's Hearts, and their utter Insensibility to each other's Wants and Miseries.—Such Things as these, and numberless others of the same dark Nature, are in one degree or other the Heritage of Man in this World, and these the pitiable Circumstances of his State and Nature; and these being the Lot of Men as such, God has not cut out for *good* Men a Road by themselves in which these Things may be avoided; but

but they must bear them in common with their Fellow-Creatures ; nay, it would be easy to mention several Circumstances of Distress which are the peculiar Portion of good Men, and fall to their Share in Consequence of their being such. And then (to finish this Article of the Account) when we have weathered thro' the various Storms of Life, the Grave is the only Port we have. The only Comfort of Nature is this *awful* one, that our Weariness is no where at Rest, but in a Place that dissolves these Bodies into Dust, and shuts us up for ever from all Converse with the Living.

2. Let us consider Man in his spiritual and intellectual Nature, and those Circumstances with regard to this, in which those who fear the Lord stand in need of Pity and Mercy. The Righteous is unspeakably more excellent and more happy than his Neighbour, in that Degree of Self-Dominion, and Liberty of the Will and moral Powers, which he has arrived to : 'Tis hideous to see (as one sometimes does) the base Captivity under which wicked Men are held by their Lusts and Passions ; very often we may observe them under strong Convictions in their Consciences of the Shamefulness and Folly of a particular Sin, and making Resolutions to have no more to do with it ; and yet complying with the first new Temptation, and all their Resolutions vanishing into Air : And 'tis equally delightful to observe in good Men the Triumphs of Religion and divine Grace, in the

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Subjection

Subjection of inordinate Desires to the Dictates of Conscience, and the Authority of God ; especially when the Sin is laid aside and overcome that did once easily beset : A good Man has an Angel's Mind in Comparison with a Soul sunk in Sensuality and Corruption ; but with all this if we consider that even this divine and renewed Part is now united to Flesh and Blood, we shall find it to lie under sad and pitiable Circumstances of Disadvantage.

The Soul is an intelligent Principle and Power ; and yet according to the present Laws of Union, it must have the Body's Leave to think and reason at all : How often are its Operations interrupted and broken in upon by the Disorder of the animal Frame ? It is confined to act by the Levers and Pullies of bodily Organs ; it receives no Intelligence but by the Instrumentality of the bodily Senses ; what Ideas and Traces it has of Things must be lodged in the Brain ; a Composition of Flesh and Fibres ; and it has no known way of conveying these to others, but by sensible Images and the Use of articulated Breath : Who does not see, by this Representation, that the Body, which is the Dwelling-Place of the Soul, is in a Sort its Prison too, and keeps it immured from its own native intellectual World, with which it has no Communication but *thro' a Glass darkly*, the Lattices and glimmering Lights of the Dungeon to which it is confined ?

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But this is not the worst of the Case ; as the Body confines the Soul, there is Danger lest it should corrupt it too : Consider the Soul of Man as a spiritual and immaterial Substance, whose Food is Truth, whose Perfection is Holiness, and whose End and Happiness is God, the Sum and Center of both ; as such, what has it to do with the Supply of bodily Wants, the Conduct of an animal Nature, and all the various Pursuits and Cares by which the Sons of Men are so much agitated ? And yet, by virtue of its Union with the Body, to all these Things, it is obliged to stoop, and to interest itself deeply in them : This is not, indeed, a Thing to be complained of, because 'tis the righteous and wise Appointment of God, and the Way he takes to discipline and train up the Spirits of Men for the more glorious State hereafter ; and accordingly the present Virtue and Religion of Man, in a good measure, lies in maintaining the Supremacy of Reason and Conscience over the Inclinations of the lower Nature, and duly discharging the Obligations of relative Life : And as it is this makes the Virtue, this also makes the Difficulty of Religion ; and is the Reason why our Duty is represented by Terms of Labour and Pain, and doing Things to which Flesh and Blood has the greatest Reluctance.

And in trying and hazardous Circumstances is the Soul, even of a good Man, by this Appointment of God often in : Appetites are importunate for a Gratification, and yet they

must be suppressed; an earthly Good of one kind or another presents itself to our Desires, and it comes so far within our reach, that if we will sacrifice Integrity and a good Conscience 'tis ours at once; and yet, by all our Hopes of Heaven, we are forbid to touch it: Our valuable Comforts in this World are embittered, are threatened, or they are removed into Darkness; and yet here we are obliged not to discover the least Impatience, or angry Resentment, but to bless a taking as well as a giving God: Or, to put a yet stronger Case, we have every earthly Satisfaction we can wish for, and that can contribute to make this World desirable, and yet we are obliged *not to love the World, nor the Things of the World*, inasmuch as, if we do so, *the Love of the Father is not in us*; Life is to be calmly resigned, when it has its sweetest Taste and Relish, if the Sovereign Lord of all calls for it, and the most alluring Engagements of any earthly Happiness must never draw down our Hearts from God, as our supreme Portion and Happiness, and a Pursuit of Heaven, as our first and great Concern. There is a solemn Competition for our Hearts, and a kind of Balance hung out from Heaven, in which we are to take an Estimate of Things; in the one Scale lies every thing that can weigh under the Name of Honour, Profit, or Pleasure, in the other Heaven and an eternal Weight of Glory: 'Tis true, in the Eye of sanctified Reason and divine Faith, the latter pre-

preponderates infinitely; for what is there *in the present Time worthy to be compared with the Glory to be revealed?* What is a Man profited if he should gain the whole World and lose his own Soul? or what can a Man give in exchange for his Soul? But——calmly to estimate and take the true Weight of Things, especially when that which lies on one side is present, and ever making its soft Addresses to our Hearts, and the Things on the other are future, invisible and eternal——is no such easy Matter; and a hard Struggle do the best of Men often find within themselves to give the better Part the Value and Esteem it ought to have with them.——

These are some of the Circumstances in which good Men stand in need of Pity and Mercy: And now having considered these,

II. I come to shew how, under all the pitiable Circumstances of their Distress, *like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, and his Mercy towards them is from everlasting to everlasting.*

There may be some People in the World, who may make the very Circumstances of Imperfection and Distress, which those who fear the Lord may be in, an Objection against God's having that tender Regard for them which the Text speaks of, God's parental Pity and everlasting Mercy, (if they were to be
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Judges and Directors) ought to operate rather in *preventing* their Distress, than *relieving* it, as that of a tender Father to his Children would. 'Tis a sufficient Answer to any such weak Suggestion to say two Things, first, that a great deal of the Distress and Misery which is in the World, was occasioned by the Sin and Apostacy of Men from God: God made neither Death nor Diseases, but *by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin, and so Death passeth upon all Men, and Diseases introduce it, because all have sinned.* Very different certainly would the State of Man on Earth have been, if he had not *sought out many Inventions*, and what the Words of this Scripture would never have fitted: As to that worse Frailty, Disease and Death, which good Men are distressed under the Sense and Feeling of, I mean the Indisposition they sometimes are under to the Exercises of Religion and the spiritual Life, (of which some Account has been given under the last Head) these are Streams from the same Fountain; or, however their Entrance into the World is accounted for, God is not the Author of them: Secondly, as to any Distress and Misery, which came by his Appointment, it is ordained for the wisest Ends, and if Men are not wanting to themselves, they may derive the most substantial Benefits from it.

This being enough to clear the Objection mentioned, let us attend to the Proof of the
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main Point, that under all the Distresses and Imperfections to which good Men are liable in this World, they have an effectual Succour and Support in the fatherly Pity and everlasting Mercy of the Lord. And as their Circumstances of Distress and Imperfection have been considered, in relation either to their *Bodies* or their *Souls*, let us keep in our Minds that Distinction.

With Regard to their *Bodies*, and the Life they spend in this World, are they *Dust*, and their *Days as the Grass*? &c. on account of the Frailty and short Extent of the Life of Man? The Appointment of God in this Affair is itself in much Mercy; however loth we may be to believe it. It is a Mercy in Providence, that the Life of *bad Men* is so frail and short as it is. What Disorders do they often bring the World into? what Mischiefs do they do, and what Misery create? And commonly the greatest to the most worthy: It is therefore a kind Dispensation, that these poisonous Weeds flourish but a little while; and that tho' the Mischief they do is great, it is not very long and lasting. As to *good Men* the Case is self-evident: They come into the World principally to secure a Title to Heaven, and a Meetness for it; and when this is done, certainly the sooner they get to their Home, and enter on their Reward, the better. It would indeed be well for the World, if God saw fit, that good People should abide a great while in the
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the Flesh ; the same Principles that make them pious towards God will make them useful to Mankind ; but the speedy Removal of such is to *themselves* a great Gain ; all that is lost on Earth is gained in Heaven. And the Frailty of Life is a Mercy to such, as well as its short Duration : *Perhaps* a due Sense of this gave them the first Turn to Religion ; it is *certainly* adapted to keep their Attention to eternal Things awake : It is a loud Call to a greater Detachment from this World, their Continuance in which is so precarious ; and to a more familiar Correspondence with the other, which they ought ever to think themselves on the Borders of.

Further : Amidst the Imperfection and Frailty of human Life, and the various Weaknesses and Disorders to which good Men are incident, they may depend on the Fatherly Pity and everlasting Mercy of God, to furnish all the Succour and Support they may stand in need of. He will support their weak Frame, guide their feeble Steps, as a kind Father does those of his tottering helpless Child : While he has any Service for them to do in his Family, they cannot die, be disabled and laid aside, and when by Incapacity or by Death he lays his Servants aside, that itself is an Evidence that he has nothing more for them to do in this World.

Sore and grievous Afflictions may be the Lot of good Men in Life ; *where is the Son*
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whom his heavenly Father hath not chastened? But the Fatherly Pity and everlasting Mercy of God, gives to good Men all the Security they can wish for, that nothing of this kind is ever done, but upon the most urgent Necessity, and for the best Reasons: And *if we had Fathers of our Flesh that corrected us, and we gave them Reverence; how much more shall we not be in Subjection to the Father of our Spirits, and live? For they verily, for a few Days, chastened us after their own Pleasure, but he for our Profit; that we might be Partakers of his Holiness,* Heb. xii. 9, 10. To this we may add the refreshing Consideration, that whatever the Afflictions are with which good Men are exercised, their kind and merciful Father who *knows their Frame*, and the Weakness of it, will always proportion them to our Strength, and give us the Grace which is sufficient for us: The parental Pity and Mercy of the Lord is the Burden of my Discourse. Now suppose a Child was to undergo a painful Operation that was necessary to the Restoration of his Health, or the saving of his Life; would the Father of that Child stand by unconcerned in those important Moments? Undoubtedly he would be ready to furnish every Cordial and Accommodation that he was able, for the Support of his Child under the Pain of the Operation, and in the Process of the Cure: The ever-merciful God has the Name, Character, and Relation of a Father; and *if earthly*
D *Parents*

Parents being evil, know how to give good Gifts to their Children ; how much more will our heavenly Father give good Things to them that ask him ?—Our Frame being Dust, and the Days of Man as Grass and the Flower of the Field, those who fear the Lord must die as well as others : God designed that Death should stand as a Monument of his high Displeasure against the first and original Sin ; and for this Reason his dearest Children are not exempted from it ; but to them who fear the Lord, the Victory is given over that last Enemy, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ : 'Tis to Christians an Enemy disarmed, a Serpent whose Sting is gone : Death ! to good Men, what is Death ? Only a dark Passage to a World of Light, and a painful Way to the Land of eternal Ease.—To the Eye of Nature, and mere Humanity, never does a Creature appear in more forlorn and distressful Circumstances, than in the Hour of Death ; but——what would a Father do for his Child at this awful Time ? Would he not use his Endeavours to smoothe his Pillow, alleviate his Pains, calm his Mind, and make his last Moments composed and quiet ?——What then may not be expected from our heavenly Father for those who fear him ? who knows our Frame, is present with the Spirits of his Children, is acquainted with all their Fears and Burdens, their Desires and Hopes ? When their Flesh and their Heart fail, he will be the Strength of their Hearts, in supporting their
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Dependance, and encouraging their Hopes : So often, so generally have Favours of this kind been shewn to good Men, that *David* directs the Attention of Mankind, to *mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the End of that Man is Peace* : Nay, a wicked *Balaam* was so fully convinced of the Truth of this Fact, that he wisheth to *die the Death of the Righteous*, and to have *his latter End like his*.

But this is not all yet ; as our Beings do not end with the Expiration of this frail and feeble Life, but are designed to be commensurate with Eternity itself, *the Mercy of the Lord is to everlasting upon them that fear him* ; and he has provided them a Happiness large as their Desires and Capacities, and durable as their Existence. He takes them, when they die, out of this World of Vanity and Imperfection, Sorrow and Sin, into his own Presence, *where there is Fulness of Joy* ; and to *his Right-Hand, where there are Pleasures for evermore*.

Nor is his Mercy only from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, but his Righteousness also unto Children's Children, to such as keep his Covenant, and to those who remember his Commandments to do them. If their Descendants do not cut off the Entail of Piety, by forsaking their Father's God ; they shall fare the better on account of the Religion of their Ancestors ; God has made this Promise, that Men might have an Encouragement to his Service of every Sort ; and be engaged to it by

the Love they have to their Offspring ; and many Evidences might be produced from Experience of the Accomplishment of it.

But the parental *Pity* and *Mercy* of the Lord has yet another Province ; that, I mean, which regards the Souls of good Men, and the distressing Circumstances of their spiritual State ; a few Instances of which it will be proper to mention.

Cannot the Mind expatiate and make those delightful Excursions into the spiritual World it gladly would ? Does this Body of Flesh and Blood imprison and cloud it, so that it *knows but in part* ? This may be a good Man's great Unhappiness and Affliction ; it may be his Disadvantage, as to the Improvement he might otherwise make, and the glorious Heights to which he might otherwise soar ; but it is no Bar to our Acceptance with God, and the Approbation of our heavenly Father : He always considers us as being what he has made us, and permits us to be in the Course of his Providence, and accepts us *according to what we have, and not according to what we have not*.—A Christian under Imperfection and Darkness, natural Incapacity or providential Indisposition with regard to the proper Exercises of the divine Life, his Heart being right with God, is as truly accepted of him to the Happiness that suits his Nature and Capacity, as is a Seraph with all his Knowledge, Flame, and active Devotion ; and we know there are a Company
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of very acute and intelligent Beings, who, for Want of Integrity and Holiness, are the Detestation and Abhorrence of God : *The Devils know, believe and tremble.*——What would a Father do, who had a humble and dutiful Child, but who, thro' some natural Defect or accidental Injury, had a slower Capacity than others to attend to and observe his Orders ? His Child's Unhappiness the Father would not think his Crime, but it would certainly excite his Pity and Consideration of him ; and we may be sure the ways of God are not less equal, nor his Regards to *his* Children less kind and compassionate.

Can't we sometimes command our Thoughts ? Are they roving and irregular ? Nay, some good People have complained, that their Thoughts are impious, even to Blasphemy. Whence do these kind of Thoughts proceed, but from the unhappy Temperament of the Body, to which our Souls are united, and which we can no more command and controul, than we can *add a Cubit to our Stature* ? And shall these Thoughts, which we detest, and which, I verily believe, rise in our Minds because we detest them, be brought in Account against us before God ? Would a wise Father lay to the Charge of his Child, any rash and extravagant Expressions he uttered against him in a Phrenzy, or the Delirium of a Fever, and that were as foreign from his ordinary Sentiments as any thing could be ?——To be sure he would pity
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the Child, whom bodily Disorder had so much put out of the Possession of himself: This then, and much more than this, may be expected from that all wise and ever merciful God, who so intimately knows our *Frame* and our Weaknesses.

Are not our Passions and Appetites so much under due Government as we would wish them to be? Do we find Desires rising after things which yet in Conscience we dare not, and will not meddle with? The bare Inclination ought not to make us pronounce severely concerning ourselves: This is purely natural, animal, and derived from the Body; it cannot be denominated a Sin, unless the Mind freely and fully complies with the Solicitation: The rising of a Desire is only the Proposal of the Temptation; if the Temptation be rejected, the Trial of our Integrity, by this means, only clears it, and makes it shine the brighter: Indeed the Struggle of Religion and virtuous Principles, with the Inclinations of our present animal Nature, is the great Instrument of Probation and Discipline for another Life: Desires and Passions are a Part of original uncorrupted Nature; and therefore they are not in themselves Sins; they are indeed the Occasions of Sin, but they are the Occasions of Virtue too, *i. e.* when we regulate and govern them well; and amidst all their Sollicitations, are able to preserve our Integrity and Purity untainted.

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Nay, lastly, do we find after all our Vigilance and Care, many Imperfections still attending us? A Thing which the most serious Experience of those who have served God in the best manner that mortal Man ever did, will testify to be true; and put to shame those who saucily talk of Perfection as attainable in this Life. Are our Hearts sometimes apt to start aside like a deceitful Bow, and serve us worst in our best Work? Is the Frame of our Minds sometimes heavy, cold and languid, as to the Exercises of Faith, Love, Devotion, and the noblest Operations of the divine Life? Do the Symptoms of Impatience, Worldliness and Pride sometimes break out; as where is the Man who can lay his Hand on his Heart, and say they do not? Do the best of Men offend in many Things, as he must have poor Notions of the Spirituality and Purity of the divine Law, or very arrogant ones of himself, who dares avow that he does not.—Let us remember, as nothing of this kind is supposed to be habitual, and done with the cool Consent of the Will, but under some occasional Indisposition, or the sudden Surprize of a Temptation; this fully distinguishes a Saint from a Sinner, and him that fears God, from him that fears him not; and it may comfort good Men under these kind of Imperfections, that *like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; and that his Mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.* The
Religion

Religion of Man is the Religion of *Man*; a Creature of imperfect Views, incompass'd with Flesh and Blood, and combating with the tumultuous Appetites and Passions of a lower Nature, and to whom therefore an ever-gracious God will make every fitting favourable Allowance: For *Presumption* in Sin there is no Relief; but as there is a thing that differs widely from it; tho' it is as wide from, and short of Perfection on the other Hand, I mean *Simplicity and godly Sincerity*, where the main Stream and Course of the Life is soberly righteous and godly, with a Consciousness at the same Time of many Infirmities, from which we rise by Repentance, and a humble Trust in the Mercy of God thro' Christ Jesus.—There can be no doubt, but God our gracious Father will pity and pardon the lamented Weakness, and accept the regular and sincere Obedience: Would not a kind Father do thus by a *Son that served him*? Would his receiving such an one be any Encouragement to another who was a determined Prodigal and Rebel? Or would it be any lessening of the Honour and Awe of his parental Government? Not the least. Safely then may we conclude, that our Father who is in Heaven will do the same.

I have left myself no Time to draw out the many useful Instructions which might be deduced from what I have advanced; and what Application will be made, I had rather chuse
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should rise out of what I shall take the Liberty of saying concerning that *excellent Woman*, whose Removal led me to this Scripture ; and indeed whose Character, Life and Death, is a Sort of Counterpart and Exemplification of it.

Mrs. ELEANOR BIGG was an Instance of the *Righteousness of the Lord unto Children's Children* : She was the Descendant of a Line that was religious as far as we can trace it up. Her Grandfather, by her Father's side, (Mr. KING) was a Man illustrious for Piety, and a publick Spirit, in the Reign of King CHARLES and JAMES the second ; and was Sheriff and Alderman of the City of *London* : Her Father frequently ventured his Life in, and devoted his Substance to the glorious Cause of the Liberties and Religion of his Country ; and had certainly been executed by the sham *Rye-House* Plot, if the King himself, from personal Knowledge of him, had not struck his Name out of the black List, and ordered him to be discharged, after several Months Confinement in a Messenger's House, whereby he was saved to do his Part at the REVOLUTION : Her Ancestors, by her Mother's Side, even to the fifth Generation, were as eminent Saints as the Church of God has known in these latter Ages : The Name of GOUGE will be precious, as long as any Taste of serious Religion remains among us ; and from one of that Name and Family did her Mother spring : She had, be-

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sides, worthy Relations, who within the Memory of most of us made a considerable Figure ; the Father in one of the highest Stations in the Church, the Son in the highest in the Law *.

The Piety and Worthiness of her Ancestors had better have been forgotten, if she had degenerated from it ; but (as your late Pastor Dr. EVANS said of her Mother, in his Funeral Sermon for her, and 'tis an Honour to the Daughter that I can now say it of her) “ the *Faith that first dwelt in them*, appeared in *her* also, so as to keep up the true religious Honour of the Line.”

That Impressions of Religion were made on her Mind early, we have this Evidence, that she desired and was admitted into the Communion of this Church in the early Part of her Life ; and how holily and unblameably she walked, how much she adorned her Profession,—by Devotion and Closet-Retirement,—by a peculiar Diligence in attending the Solemnities of public Worship,—by Sweetness of Temper,——Family good Government,——by the tenderest Concern for all the Interests of *one* for whom she had a Mother's Care, and almost a Mother's Love,——how she filled up every Station of Life, both before she entered into the Marriage-State, and since ; I have now before me many Witnesses ; HER HUSBAND, and he will praise her ; and, tho' she had

* Dr. TALBOT, late Bishop of Durham, and the Lord TALBOT, late Lord High Chancellor of England.

had no Children, there are some here, who like Children, *will rise up and call her blessed.*

From the lively Vigour of Health she long enjoyed, her Husband and Friends promised themselves many Years of Satisfaction and Comfort in her; when all of a sudden a Dis-temper seized her which spoiled all their hopeful Prospects; took from her first the Freedom of her Speech, then her Limbs, then impaired her Understanding, and lastly put an End to her Life.—And in all this, she is an Instance of the Truth of those Words of the Text, that *as for Man his Days are as Grass, &c.* Let none impeach that Providence which appointed this Dispensation, nor dare to entertain the least Suspicion of her Religion who was the Subject of it: The Ways of God are just and true, tho' great and marvellous; and as to this good Woman herself, as while she had her Capacities of Body and Mind, she employed them as a Christian ought to do, it is not with me the least Doubt, but that she *was* as dear to God, under all the pitiable Weaknesses and Incapacities of her latter Life, and *is* as happy now, as if none of these Things had befallen her.

The World and her Friends have lost the Usefulness and good Example of her later Years; Indisposition has prevented her leaving her dying Testimony to Religion; but that is *our* Disadvantage not *hers*: Death has been to her a more than common Gain, as it has laid her poor shattered bodily Frame at rest in the

Grave ; has loosed her Soul from that Prison within a Prison, in which it has lately been confined, and delivered her out into all the full and glorious Liberty of the Sons of God. Her best Life, that of Religion, has lately lain dormant and unactive, like Fire smothered up among the Embers ; but now, I firmly believe, she like the Angels, is a Flame of Fire, Love and active Devotion.

It should reconcile surviving Friends to her Removal, it should make them rejoice in it, that they have Reason to believe and hope that she is gone to a State, where she has *truly* found herself again ; where *all that is perfect, is come ; and all that was in part is done away.*

Of the Reality of such a glorious State for holy Souls, such Instances as we have now been meditating upon, are to me a strong Presumption : When I have seen the piteous Circumstances to which this good Woman's Disorder had reduced her, more than once have I said to myself, Certainly *this* cannot be the State in which the Existence of Man shall end : There must be a World hereafter, in which the Principles both of Rationality and Religion, will be able to breathe more freely, and exert themselves with more Ease and Vigour than they are found to do in any, much less in Creatures so oppressed. If it can be otherwise, I have been ready to say, *God made all Men in vain*, and the Births both of Intelligence

gence and Grace, are in a great Measure abortive.

We have, further, an Instance of the Frailty and Vanity of all human Trust and Dependance, and a Lesson *to cease from Man whose Breath is in his Nostrils : Whereof is he to be accounted?* In particular, an Instruction *to make haste, and not delay to keep God's Commandments :* Well for our departed Friend ! She trusted to no Vigour of Constitution, but gave to God her Might and the Beginning of her Strength, and had not her Work to do, when the Time of her working was over. Do you, her surviving Friends, especially those of you who are young, imitate the Pattern of early Piety, she has left you : The Character of Piety in this religious Family has not been lost ; nay has not, that I know of, had one Interruption for Generations : The oldest here cannot remember the Time, when there was not one or more of them, who was an Ornament to Religion in this Part of the Christian Church : O that the sacred Entail might never be cut off, but carried on from Time to Time, thro' many succeeding Generations ! I do not doubt, but you have had many Family-Blessings among you for the sake of your pious Progenitors ; *their Faith follow, remembering the End of their Conversation : Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*

F I N I S.

THE
MUSEUM



